[Mike Pelletier]

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PUB. Living Lore in New England

(Maine)

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WRITER Robert F. Grady

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COMMENTS

The Life Of Mike Pelletier, French Canadian

Pulp & Paper,

(As told by himself to Robert F. Grady)

(continued)

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[??]

Maine

Living Lore

Old Town——15 Mike: “All right, let's go. I wish James folks were here now. You'd get a lot about Oldtown from them. James and his family were visiting us last summer, and we took them around to a lot of places in the car. He is the chief of poliece in Valley Park, Missouri. He sat with me out there in the sun porch with the windows open and a breeze blowing in, and he says to me, “Mike, the breeze from that pine wood is wonderful[!?] We never get anything like that in Missouri.” I'd been living right near that wood all my life, and I never thought anything about it. We took them down to Bar Harbor to the Thunder Hole, and down to the coast to dig clams.” [Copy - 1?] Mrs. Pelletier: “James enjoyed that clam digging: it was something entirely new to him. We had a clam bake on the shore. He gets a big kick out of photography, and he took a lot of pictures down there.”

Mrs. Pelletier stepped out of the room for a moment to return with a box of prints and enlargements made by James. In several of the scenes the entire group had been photographed, and Mr. Pelletier explained that James camera was equipped with a time arrangement that enabled him to focus the camera and join the group before the shutter was snapped. The enlargements, which were about as large as sheets of typewriting paper, were especially good. Among the prints was a picture of Thunder Hole, several taken at the scene of the clam digging, and one taken on Indian Island.

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Mrs. Pelletier: (pointing to the picture taken on the Island) “It was very funny. Mrs. James asked one or the Indians if the natives ever got wild. She meant, or course, if they ever went on the warpath or scalped people. The Indian said, ‘A few of us do, madam, but only on Saturday nights.’” Good Mike: “James thought living so near the hunting and fishing regions was great. He said they had to travel two or three days to get a chance to hunt where he came from, and the season lasted only three days at that. He was pretty enthusiastic about this place, and he said that when he started on his vacation next year he wasn't going to stop anywhere enroute, but that he was going to come straight to

Oldtown.” Mrs. Pelletier: “It's no wonder they liked Oldtown so well. We were out there in Saint Louis once. That is such a smoky city! If you put your hand on a rail outdoors you get it sooty, and the bricks in the buildings are not red, but black from soot. The smoke doesn't rise like it does here: it settles down near the ground.

“We liked the trip on the bus. Those drivers are such smart young men! We never had to think about our baggage.” Mike: “I enjoyed watching those drivers cut around corners in New York City with those big busses. We went on the Greyhound Line. We went through the Holland Tunnel and across New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana. On the way back we came by the southern route through Virginia. At the end of the run I noticed there was a mark on the back of the drivers coat where the back of the seat had pressed against it.

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“And speaking of travel reminds me of something about Oldtown. When the Maine Central first run here it was called the European Railroad. The Bangor and Aroostook was caned the Bangor and Piscataquis, and it run from Bangor to Greenville. Later they run the trains to Bangor around the other way and the trains from Oldtown connected with them at South Lagrange. That train was called the Hump backed Express because the conductor, Jim Elder, was humpbacked. The Bangor and Aroostook tracks were torn up five years ago, and the people who owned lots along the right of way shared in that land. They tore up three of the bridges up above here, and where their roundhouse was in Hartwell there is now a trailer camp. R. Grady: “Do you know anything about that old house that Chester Robbins repaired? Mike: “That old house on Chester Street used to be called the Sawtelle house. George Harding's wife, who was a Getchell, inherited that place, and Harding sold it to Robbins. Some people say the land belongs to the Maine Central, and some say the city owns it. The house was about ready to fall down, and every one thought Robbins, who has a lot of civic pride, was going to tear it down to rid the town or an eyesore. But instead or that he started to repair it. He put on an expensive roof, built new foundations, and put in new windows and so forth. I understand he intended to make the place over into an inn,

but for some reason he didn't complete the repairs. Maybe he thought he'd lose money if he started a [hotel[- ?]-there?] are so many overnight camps around here. That would have been a good location for a hotel, though, as it's so near the station. =

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The kids have smashed out most of the windows, and it probably wont be long before it looks as bad as ever." Mike: "That sawmill of General Veazie's where my father worked was before my time. I know he worked there, but I couldn't describe it. In the winters they never used to remove the snow from the roads; they just broke them out. The people would just shovel paths from the door to the road.

"At those kitchen breakdowns we used to have whatever kind of music there was available. Somebody might have a fiddle, or maybe it would be an accordian or a Jews harp. Sometimes we sang songs. If there wasn't room for square dancin', we'd dance clogs. We used to have straw rides, too, but I guess they kind of went out when the automobiles came in. About twenty of us-or ten couples-used to fill a hayrack with straw, toss in a barrel of beer, and set out for some farmhouse. I've / gone on more than one of them out to French Settlement-West Oldtown- or Pushaw Pond. When we went to French Settlement some one would go out around to all the farms and collect as many people as they could to join / in the fun. We sang songs, danced, played games- like " postoffice " - drank the beer and had a good time generally." [#?]

"I was out fishin' once with a fellow and we forgot to bring any bait with us. We didn't know just what to do about it, but I saw a snake witha frog in his mouth, and I says to my partner, ' If we only had that frog it might do.' 'Watch me get that,["?] he says, and he pulled a bottle of whiskey out of his pocket and poured some into the snake's mouth. The snake dropped the frog, and we used that for bait. Well, after we caught a few fish we started 19 to look around for some more frogs, and what did we see but our friend the snake with two more frogs in his mouth that he was bringin' to us. [See?] [James Taylor??] TALL TALE: (Virginia)

“I told that story to Mayor Cousins at a Grange meetin', and he says, ‘M[?]M[?]Mile, I d-d-didn't know you d-d-drank.’ He's an awful man to stammer. He's not so bad when he's with just one, but when he's talkin' to a crowd he's pretty bad.

There's been just three changes in the work in the evaporatin' room since I went to work at Great works. When I started work there they used / to burn the liquor by hand. Then they put in those three rotary burners. The automatic burner they have now is the best of them all. [#?]

“I've seen some bad accidents down there. Jo Gallant was down in the basement when a digester started to blow. The collar came off a valve and the digester blew right in the basement room. When we cleared away that pulp we found Jo on his hands and knees against the wall. His flesh was cooked so much that when we tried to pick him up, the flesh came off in our hands. You probably remember when old Henry Curran got his sleeve cought when he was oilin' a shaft. Before they got the power shut off every bone in Curran's body was broken.

“Those epidemics that used to carry off so many children couldn't happen now because the doctors know more about takin' care of sick people. They have serums that help to keep diseases from gettin' out of control now.

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Old Doctor Folsom brought me out of the black diphtheria. He used to stamp around with that wooden leg of his. One of his legs was out off so that the stump was just long enough to strap the wooden leg to.”

“I never saw any trouble or fights in the woods, but I saw a couple of bad accidents. They have men workin' around the blacksmith shop makin' [sleds?], and one of these fellows had a sled runner between his legs and he was hewin' away at it with an ax when the ax slipped and cut his knee cap right in two. I saw another fellow get his leg crushed with

a log on the landin'. That was up at Brandy Pond, about 18 miles above Costigan. They had to haul those fellows out to the railroad station at Costigan, and from there they took them to she hospital in Bangor. There wasn't much they could do for those fellows in the woods except to do a rough job at settin' the bone and put splints on the leg, but I supose that had to be done over again when they got the fellow to the hospital. [/?] . [/?] With that split knee cap all they could do was to bind it up to stop the bleeding, and get the fellow to Bangor as quick as they could. [.?]

“There was seventy five man in that crew where I was. On rainy days the'd sit around playin' cards—poker, for matches or beans, or high-low-jack. Sometimes they'd have some clothes to darn or mend, and sometimes they'd grind axes or make ax handles. I've seen as much as a barrel of ax handles ahead. They made some pretty good handles just with an ax and a jack knife and maybe a piece of broken glass.

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“To play poker if you didn't have any money you could go to the wangan and get a can of smokin' or a plug or chowin' tobacco. The banker in the game would give you ten or fifteen beans for that, and if you still had the beans at the end of the game, you could get your tobacco back. A bean represented one cent in merchandise. The men were supposed to boil their clothes every week or two on Sunday, but some of them didn't bother. We used to build a bonfire down by the brook, and put the underwear in a boiler full of water over the fire.

There was always some one [?], that collected spruce gum that they kept in a cloth bag. They'd make a dollar or two sellin, the gum to some drug store when they got down river in the spring.

“Beans were cooked in bean holes mostly on the drives, but sometimes they cooked them that way in the woods. You see on the drives the men were always on the move, and they couldn't very well carry a stove with them and keep takin' it down and settin' it up all all the

time. They knew where tose those bean holes were along the shore, and all the cook had to do when the rear went by was to hop into a boat with his pots and pans and provisions and row down to the next bean hole.

“We used to cook about ten quarts of dried beans a day for those seventy five ment men, and that would be twenty quarts of cooked beans. The bean hole was about two feet deep and three feet square, but I've seen them four feet square. We lined the hole with rocks to hold the heat, and then we threw in some wood and got a good fire going. When there was plenty of hot ashes and coals in the hole we raked them away from the middle and set in the bean pot. Then we raked the coals and ashes back over the iron pot.

That pot had an iron cover that fitted on tight. We never had to add any water because that cover kept all the steam in. We filled the hole in with ashes. The beans cooked in about twelve hours and they had to soak about twelve hours before they were put in the hole. We used about a pound or pork to a quart or beans, and about a cup of molasses, to color the beans, to ten quarts.” Mike: The only fruit we ever had for the table in that camp was stewed prunes. We had salt cod and plenty of beef. Sometimes we had pea or bean soup or beef stew. We always had doughnuts, and sometimes the cook wouldn't use the bean hole; he'd just cook the beans on top or the stove in the iron pot.

“On those clammin' trips we always brought a little something to eat along with the clams. It might be bread, crackers, cake, pie-anything that any one wanted to bring along. Green corn, on the cob, is pretty good cooked along with the clams. You just cook it right under the seaweed. You always have to take something along to drink for there's no fresh water down there at the shore. A lot of people make tea or coffee when they're cookin' the clams. You don't have to pay anything to digh dig clams—just find a good place and go to it.

“They have clam hoes to dig the clams with, but I always used a garden spade. One of those, you know, with four prongs on it. The way we baked the clams was to find a flat

rock and build a fire on it of driftwood to heat it up. When the rock is pretty hot you rake the ashes off and just lay the clams on the rock with some seaweed over them. I suppose the clams are really steamed because there's a lot of water in them and the steam forces the shells open. The water drops down on the hot rock and makes a lot of steam too.

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Mike: “When I started goin' to school there were just two schools here: the McKinley School up there next to the city hall, and that little one down on Main Street that Mitchell made over into a house. There was just two rooms and two classes in that school /(on Main Street): one upstairs end one down. The McKinley school, where I started in, was a lot bigger. They had four big rooms,—two up and two down-and the hallways and coat rooms were big. There were two grades in every room except one where there were three. Those were what they called the intermediate grades— 3, 4, and 5. There were two teachers in that room - one was Fannie Murphy. Frank Averill's sister, Gertie, taught in one of the rooms upstairs for a long time before she went to work in the postoffice. That McKinley School was a two story, wooden building with a brick and granite basement. They used coal in the furnace to heat the school. There was fairly modern plumbing in the basement, but there weren't many houses in town then - even the best ones - that had sewer connections. There was no drinkin' water piped inside, but there was a good well in the yard. There was no fire escape on that building, but it would be a pretty modern school even today. The seats were about like what they have nowadays, and everything was hardwood inside. That McKinley School burned flat soon after they built that big Helen Hunt School on Brunswick Street. That was named for a teacher that taught here for a long time. Now they have that Helen Hunt School and the Herbert Grey School and a high school in Oldtown, besides the convent and a school in Great works (ward 5) and one on French Island. Of course there are a lot of little country schools outside the city. /#]

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“About the only story I can think of right now about when I went to school is about a boy named Fortin. He was pretty wild, and they had to expel him for actin' rough and swearin'.

He threw a book and hit Miss Edgerly right in the face. She was a daughter of that Dr. Edgerley that used to be here. George Sewell was the superintendent of schools then, and he came down and expelled Fortin.

“I don't think anybody carried a lunch then because we all lived right in town. The kids that lived out in the country had their own little schools then, but they've closed some of them because it's cheaper to bring the scholars in to town in busses than it is to run the little schools. That would have been pretty hard to bring the kids in sixty years ago because they had no big, fast busses or good roads like they have now.

“The convent is the only wooden school they have now right in the city. I went there the last two years I went to school. They had no plumbing in that then, but they have now. They had a pump in the yard too, but they did away with that. The city condemmed most of those wells some years ago, but the city water is treated with chlorine and it's all right to drink.

One of my chums, Freddie King, was killed when he was seven years old. He was out swimmin' and he dived in and struck his head on a rock under the water. I wasn't there when he got hurt, but I went to his funeral. He lived just three days and his head swelled up to twice its proper size. Charlie King was his father.

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“I never had a bicycle when I was a boy—I was afraid to get on one. All they had here then were tricycles and those with a big wheel in front. [You?] could get an awful flip on one of those things. There was just that small wheel behind, and if it struck a rock, you were apt to get tossed right over the handlebars.” R. Grady: I thought those bicycles went out long before you were born.” Mike: “No: they had them around here then.

“I was the oldest boy at home, and I helped quite a lot with chores around the house. I shoveled paths in the winter and helped some in the garden in the summer, arrried carried in wood, and brought in water from a pump in the yard. Father always raised some

tobacco every year. Some of the leaves on those plants would be 18 inches long. He used to cut the tops off so the plants would spread out more. He started them in a hot bed so they'd have a little longer growin' season.

“When I was ten years old I used to go out in the woods with father to help out the years wood. We took our lunch and stayed all day. We'd build a fire at noon and heat up whatever we had. It was usually meat or egg sandwiches and some kind of pie or cake. We used to carry a bottle of tea that we'd heat up out in the woods in a big tin can that we kept for that. We cut ten cords every year - that's what we used in the house. What we cut one winter, we'd use the next.

“When I was a kid I was too busy to have any ambitions. I had some younger brothers and sisters, and I had to help father to support them. When I got that job in Great Works the only ambition I had was to stay right there as long as I could.” (He's been there [for 53 years.?])

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R. Grady: “You evidently had an ambition to get a pretty nice house for yourself.” Mike: “Yes, I got this house, such as it is, and it's all paid for, too. I own two lots across the street where my garage is, and I generally have a garden over there every year. I got a Dodge car in 1928 and last year my wife swapped it for a new Plymouth. She made the deal and I didn't know a thing about it. We took a trip up to Canada that year to see a cousin of mine who runs a garage there, and about a week after we got back this fellow drove into the yard with a new Plymouth. ‘Is that your car,” I says, when we were sittin' here in the kitchen. ‘No', he says, 'that's yours! and she's a sweet runnin' baby.’ ‘Mine?’ I says, and he says, 'sure, ‘ and he told me how my wife had arranged to turn in the Dodge when we were up in Grand Isle. (I'm not sure now whether he said Grand Isle or Grand Falls: it was either one.)

“That Dodge was in pretty good shape. Of course it pumped oil, but all it needed to stop that was new rings. When he left here to go home in the Dodge he says, 'do you suppose I'll make it?’ We got a postal from him that he mailed the next day. He left here at nine in the morning, and he got to Grand Isle (?) at 5 o'clock that night, so the old Dodge must have traveled right along. I like this Plymouth though. You can get that up to sixty miles an hour and it rides smoother than the Dodge used to at thirty. I never run a car in the winter, and I guess that Plymouth will last me as long as I live.

“I was twelve years old when I learned to play the accordian, and Home Sweet Home was the first piece I learned. I played the harmonica when I was ten. Father played the violin, and Lewis and George played the [/Harmonica?].

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Lewis played the accordian some, too. Some of those old pieces we used to play you never hear now, and I don't know where anybody could get them, if they could at all. There was Peek-a/Boo [Peek-a-/Boo , Rock-a-bye-Baby, Man in the Moon, speed the Plow, and a lot more like Over the Waves and Turkey in the Straw that didn't die out. /=[/?]=

“We used to have a lot of parties in those days, ana we generally had a good time. The expense was so small that it wasn't worth mentionin'. We used to play Postoffice, Spin the Plate, Play the Cushion, Catch the Rat, Blind Man's Bluff and The Turn Over Game. In that last one two of them used to lay down on the floor head to head and on their backs, and lock legs together and try to turn each other over. The girls used to play it, too. They'd wear bloomers or put on an old pair of pants, and some of theme were pretty good at it. I've seen them turn some of the men over. Spin the Plate, Blind Man's Bluff, and Catch the Rat were kissin' games. They'd take a plate and stand it on edge and give it / a spin. If you could catch it without knockin' it flat, you could kiss the girl, but if you missed the plate, you had to take a turn spinnin' it. In Catch the Rat they had a handkerchief tied up to represent the rat and you had to pick out the one that had the handkerchief. Everybody knows how to play Blind Man's Buff and Postoffice. In that cushion game they used to put

a sofa cushion on the floor behind some one. The game was to sit down before some one could pull the cushion away.

“We used to have candy pulls, too, and molasses candy was a great favorite. They used a cup of molasses to a half cup of sugar, a little salt, some vinegar, and a spoonful of butter. After that cooked a while they set it on the back of the stove to cool off a bit, and 28 then they stirred in some soda to make it [foam?] [foam?] up.. Then they'd take it out and pull it until it started to harden up. Some people used butter on their hands durin' that pullin; and some used flour. That pullin seemed to make the candy grainy and less glassy. It had about the same effect as kneedin' dough, I guess. Sometimes at those parties we had ice cream, and we always made that at home in a freezer; it wouldn't have seemed like a party unless we did. /a

[?]They used to make maple sugar around here, too. George Gardner has a sugar house now out near his cottage on the road to Pushaw Pond. They had big pans to put the sap in, and they'd build a ire fire under them to boil the sap down. Once they started sugar makin' they kept it up day and night until they got throught. There were three stages in that boilin' process. They got maple syrup from the first- that's what George Gardner makes, mostly- soft maple sugar candy in the second, and maple sugar in the third. They had moulds in the shape of banks, churches, dolls, and so forth that they used in [makim?] makin' maple sugar candy.

“You were sayin' something about superstitions the last time you were here. About seventy years ago there used to be a brick house down near the river below Wingss Wing's Mill. That was a ‘bad’ house, and there was a ledge along side of it that ran right down to the water. Some people named Miles lived there. My father said somebody told him they looked in through a window one night and they saw old Miles, with black gloves on his hands, dancin' around the room. The queerest part of that place was the tracks in the ledge that led from the door down to the edge of the water.

There was an awful deep hole in the river bed right there. I've seen those tracks myself and I've walked barefoot in them. They were the tracks of a man and you could see where a dog had walked alongside of him. Right near the edge of the water there was a place scooped out of the ledge so that it looked like a seat in the rock. I don't know how that got there. It couldn't have been worn by the water because it was too high up for that. I'ts pretty hard to account for those tracks in the ledge, too. They were all of three inches deep, and I've seen them myself. That was all of sixty years ago. That ledge is all covered up now with dirt and saw dust. People used to say that it was the devil that walked across there. Beliefs

“Then there was the old Burnham house on Main Street, half way between here and Great Works, that they said was haunted. Nobody lived there, but at night people said that sometimes you could see lights goin' from one room to another.

I've heard my father tell stories about Canada, and some of them were facts.

“When they started a now village up there they used to bury people under the church until a cemetary cemetery was made ready. There was a girl died up there, and her folks noticed that her flesh stayed soft. She was buried under the church, and when it came time to dig her up to put her over in the cemetery, her mother said she'd like to have the coffin opened so she could see her daughter again. They opened that coffin and they found that the girl had turned over on her face, and that most of her hair had been pulled off and ther the ends of her fingers had been worn down to the bone.

She evidently had woke up out of the trance she was in, and as long as the air held out she struggled to get out of that grave. There was another story about a woman that died, and when they were havin' a funeral service in the church she sat up in the casket, and then got up and walked home. The undertakers never used to embalm anybody then, and

I suppose the doctors didn't know so much as they do now, either, and sometimes people got burried alive.

“There was a story about two brothers that lived some distance from the village store. One of the brothers was down at the store one night, and when he was there the other one told his mother he was goin' down the road a ways to scare him when he was comin' back. He was a kind of wild actor, and he got an old cowhide with the horns on it and pulled it on over his head and waited behind a tree near the road until he saw his brother comin' home. The other brother saw this figure with the horns comin' to meet him and he picked up a fence rail to defend himself. He hit his other brother right between the horns and laid him out on the road and then he ran home and told his folks that he had killed the devil. The old folks had an idea of what had happened and they ran down the road to look. They found their son laying there with his head smashed. Accordin' to the old story they weren't able to get the horns off the boy's head, and they had to bury him that way. He'd played the devil so much that he finally turned into one. Story

“There was another story my father used to tell that he thought couldn't have happened, but with what we know now about radio waves we can see that it could have been possible. Sounds are carried 31 around the earth now on waves of electricity, and there's no reason why they couldn't have been then. Accordin' to the story, some people were sittin' on a porch one night, and they heard the sounds of oars in [rowlocks?]. It sounded as though some one was rowin' a boat up in the air. Then they heard a Shout: ‘LOOK OUT! THERE's A ROCK AHEAD! Now the people in that boat might have been a thousand miles away, and the sounds they made might have been picked up and carried along by electricity in the air and attracted to that spot by some natural magnet in the rocks. Back in the old days they said things like that were the work of banshees.” [Irish? ?] [?] say this in Maine?

(On a previous visit to Mr. Pelletier's home I asked Mike to describe the improvements that had occured in his room since he started work there. He described three processes in

detail, but, as I said before, I couldn't remembery any part of them. This time I asked him to describe only the first one. He did that but he went on and described the other two as well, so I was just as bad off as before. Guess I'll have to ask him to write out the account or those processes.)

“That work is a lot easier now. When I started in there I had to work ten or twelve hours a day for only $1.25. Now I work six hours and I get three times as much pay. My wife went down to Bangor today to some sale and Bill [Rioux?] is uptown, so I'm all alone. However I put up my own lunch anyway. My wife used to ask me if I didn't want her to get up and get my breakfast, but I told her to stay in bed. I could get breakfast and put up a lunch just as well as she could. There was once I was puttin' up six lunches includin' my own.

“My wife and I are goin, to play at a grange meetin' in 32 Bangor Tuesday [night?], but we'll have to use our old accordians. I sent for two new ones to Montgomery, Ward, and Company, but when they got here I found they weren't matched. When we play on those old ones you'd think it was just one instrument, but I knew the minute I touched the keys on those new ones that they were different. keys. The keys, are supposed to be stamped on a little tag that goes on top of the accordians, but those didn't have any. However I should think they would have known out there that the two weren't matched. All they had to do was to press down on the fifth key. That gives the key to the accordion. I suppose some shippin' clerk saw they [looked?] alike and thought they were alike, but if you played two like that together it would sound pretty bad. I like a C or a D because they go better with / a piano”.

(I reminded Mike that he had promised to play the accordian for my other boy if I brought him over, so he obligingly led the way into the living room and picked up one of the instruments. He played the lively Turkey in the Straw and then he told the boy that he had time to play just one more before it would be time for him to get ready to go to work. “My boy,” he said, “I know you're tired of listenin' to old Mike tell stories, and you'd like to be home playin', so I'll play one you'll be glad to hear—-good old Home Sweet Home!”)

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Mike: “I guess the reason father left Canada to come to Maine was because a lot of other people had left there and he had heard that there were more jobs over here and better pay. I never heard him tell of any unusual experiences on the trip down. That took about five days. I remember now he did say that one night one of the kids felt seared because the place where they stopped to sleep was in the woods. (Mike said before that[, ?] they had come down in a covered wagon.) The roads were pretty bad then. That country wasn't built up very much then and a lot of the route lay through woodland.

“We travel a lot in our car in the summertime. Out in Missouri that time we went to see the [Lindberg?] trophies in the memorial building in Saint Louis. Say, about everything you could imagine was there: diamond pins, watches, cups, and the Lord knows what else. All given to Lindberg by admirers of his. There was so much stuff that he couldn't possibly keep it all and he left it in this memorial building. Anybody could spend all day there just looking [overtthesae?] over [these?] things. It doesn't cost anything to go through there.

“We go out berry pickin' every year. Last year we got sixty quarts of raspberries up at the Jordan cuttings. They used to be thick a few years ago over at the radio line, in Bradley, but that place is all growed up now. It's pretty well growed up too out at Pushaw Pond. Those places last only about three years. We always take out a few sandwiches for a lunch and a little drinkin' water. We could have got along without a lunch last summer, though, out at the Jordan cuttings. I never saw such big berries. We filled our pails in no time.

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Mrs. Pelletier: “It took me longer than that, though, to put them up.

“Mike and I played over at the convent as a social Sunday night. That was given for Father Oullette.” Mike: “He's a fine man, and well liked here.” Mrs. Pelletier: “We played the accordians and there was violin and piano music. There was no dancing.” Bill Rioux:

“There'd be no room for dancing in a school room.” Mike: “WEll, they wouldn't have danced, anyway, on Sunday night. There was a few speakers, and after that we had some light refreshments in the shape of cake and coffee.” Mrs. Pelletier: “There was some dancing, though, down in Hampden Monday night when we played at that grange meeting. We didn't get home 'till four oclock in the morning and it was five before we got to bed.” Mike: “That dancing was just to keep warm. I played the accordian for about an hour while we were waitin' for the bus to come along and pick us up.. There was about 300 grange members down there and I guess the feature of the evening was the clam chowder.”

(I mentioned that I had seen Mr. and Mrs. Pelletier's names in the paper after they had played at the Father Oullette social but that I didn't recognize the names at first because “Michael” was spelled “Magliore.”) Mrs. Pelletier: “Mike's name is really ‘Mitchell’. Ive always spelled my name ‘Pelletier,’ but he spells his ‘Pelky.’ It's funny up on the voting lists they have me down as Mrs. Catherine Pelletier and him as Mike Pelky.

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I heard that old mill(the Oldtown Woolen mill, which has been shut down for two years) has been sold. They say they're going to junk some of she old looms and put in automatic worsted looms. I heard, too, that it was going to be a powder mill and an aeroplane factory. I wish that mill would start - it would be such a fine thing for Oldtown. But I'll believe it two weeks after it starts up.

(Albert came in about here to ten about the accident to his wife, and Mrs. Pelletier left to go over there.) Mike: “They don't have any of those straw rides and breakdowns like I told you about the last time, now. They went out when the automobile came in. The young folks, now, go to dances and the movies. The older people go to bridge and whist parties. Some times the young folks have parties where they play postoffice. Those old games like 'spin the Plate’ would make a hit with them. I know it because we've tried it out right here.

“We go to card parties once in a while, but I don't believe we've been to the movies twice in the last year. Those ‘love pictures' are no good, but I like a good western. I don't read much now, but I used to like western magazines and stories. When I was a kid I never got enough of those wild west yarns. In the Bangor News I like the sports pages and ‘[smiles?] for breakfast.’ They have some good jokes there.

“About the only woods work around the state now is pulp cuttin: the big stuff is [goo?] all gone. When they used to cut that big stuff the head chopper would spot the trees ahead of the sawyers by cuttin a little spot of bark off on the side that the trees were to fall. Then the [sawyers?] would saw them down. Sometimes they'd get two or 36 three logs out of one tree. The head swamper planned the direction of the roads, and swampers would out the trees down as near the ground as they could. They'd throw the brush to one side and fill in holes in the road with short logs. The logs that the sawyers cut were hauled to yards and piled up there. One sled tender always worked with every teamster. After the logs were yarded they were hauled on sleds to landings near the brook or river that would carry them down to the boom in the spring. Woodsmen and log drivers worked from daylight 'till dark. The drivers had a longer day because the days were longer in the spring and summer. They slept in tents, and sometimes they rolled up in the blankets with their clothes wet. It was a hard life and men had to be plenty tough. They never had colds. You know we were talkin' about bean holes the other night. You could generally find one of those near ‘rips' for the drives were usually slowed up in those places, and they were generally where the jams occurred.

“On those brook landings sometimes they'd pile logs right on the ice, and sometimes they'd pile them along the shore. I've seen logs piled fifteen feet high against two trees. In the spring they'd cut those trees down and let the logs roll into the water.” Bill Rioux: “I've never seen that done, Mike.” Mike: “Well, I have. Right up here on Beaver Brook.” Bill Rioux: “It must have been a job to cut those two trees down.” Mike: “It was dangerous work. In the spring those logs were floated down to the boom and the work of raftin'

began. Two or three hundred men and boys worked there when I did, but the number kept dwindlin' down every year until finally the work stopped altogether. There was a lot of logs piled up in a jam back of the gap, and a lot of different companies owned them. All the companies had their own marks and they used a different 37 kind of mark for every kind of log; that is, pine, cedar, hemlock, wad so forth. Those marks were cut on the logs up in the woods, and the logs were suppossed to be rafted with the marks up. Those marks were something like the brands they put on cattle out west. 'diamond, rabbit tract; flyin' goose; cross two notches, and so forth.

“There was an openin' in a boom in front of the jam that they called the ‘gap,” and the logs were pushed down through that gap and rafted along a double boom they called the 'shore logs' that reached down the river half a mile or more. All the rafters had to do was to raft the logs together with wedges and a rope. The checkers stood out on little jiggers made of three or four short logs wedged together and hooked with a short rope to a line that stretched from one end of the boom to the other. Every checker had his own [‘beat’?] and every [beat?] was made up of ‘joints,’ or rafts. The checker rolled the logs while they were floatin' by him and pushed out the ones that were suppossed to be rafted on his [beat?]. The logs they missed were rafted in a 'stray raft’ at the end of the boom, and pulled back upstream when the raft got large enough. When the rafts on the different [beats?] got large enough they were 'dropped off’ in a 'swing.’ The men who handled the swings didn't do anything else.

“All they have now on the river is pulp wood drives, but they're nothing like the old ones. The pulp wood is cut four feet long and peeled in the woods. The boom is a thing of the past. Last year about 40,000 cords of pulp wood came down the river to Great Works, and 60,000 came by train. They haul it all the year around in trucks. They used about 500,000 cords last year. You see they have 50,000 cords in just one yard, and they have several yards down there.

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“Say, I thought of something since the last time you were here. I guess it would come under the head of superstitions. When I was a kid they used to have treasure seekers here. The story got around that there was treasure buried somewhere along the river, and people used to pick out likely places to dig for it. There was a medium over in Bradley, here, and some fellows got the idea that she might help them. They went over to see her and she went into a trance and finally described some place where she said there was some treasure buried. Those fellows found what they thought was the place and started to dig. Finally they unearthed a pail with a metal cover, but when they got the cover off all there was in the pail was something that looked like a lot of leaves. They were pretty sore and they throw the pail away and went back and told the medium about what happened. ‘You fools,’ she says, ‘one of you broke the spell. You had the treasure in your hands, and you threw it away!’ According to the story if any one spoke before they got the treasure in their hands, it turned out to be worthless, and that's what the medium meant when she told them that one of them broke the spell.

“Those stories were all about the same pattern. I've heard a lot of them. Some men went down the river a ways to the tide water and started to dig there. They came to a chest and one of the men shouted, ‘WE've GOT IT!’ That, of course, broke the spell, and they found the chest was empty. Pretty near the same story was told about a party that dug up here near Eva's Point, opposite Indian Island.” Bill Rioux: “I remember hearin' about that. It happened about seventy years ago.” Mike: “I guess nobody'll ever dig up any treasure around here, but there must be alot of stuff buried here just the same.”